OR2
M424

Pacific School of
Religion
Berkeley, Calif.

To the Pacific School
of Religious from
P. H. Mathews

BAHÁ'Í PUBLISHING COMMITTEE
435 East 24th Street
New York, N. Y., U. S. A.

WHENCE COMES THE LIGHT?

by

LOULIE A. MATHEWS

BAHÁ'Í STUDIES

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION
LIBRARY
1962

Printed by permission of

The Star of the West

National Bahá'í Magazine

New York City

1929

Pacific School of Religion
Berkeley, Calif.

365
M38
1929

REFERENCES

A Traveller's Narrative: E. G. Browne.
'Abdu'l-Bahá in London.
Bahá'í Administration.
Bahá'í Scriptures.
Bahá'u'lláh and His Message: J. E. Esselmont.
Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era: J. E. Esselmont.
Divine Philosophy: 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
Episodes in the Life of Moneereh Khanum.
Epistle to the Son of the Wolf: Bahá'u'lláh.
The Bahá'í Revelation: Thornton Chase.
The Bahá'í World 1926-28.
The Book of Ighán: Bahá'u'lláh.
The Seven Valleys: Bahá'u'lláh.
Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

TO

RÚḤÍ EFFENDI AFNÁN

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/whencecomeslight0000math

FOREWORD

The lives of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá are briefly outlined within these pages that the student may approach the Bahá'í Cause with an understanding of the noble grandeur of its founders.

The Bahá'í writings pour light upon every phase of life. Through them we are made aware of the scientific and spiritual meanings of evolution and our responsibility toward the kingdoms beneath us. Through them problems pertaining to the present day are solved; the laws underlying prayer and healing clarified; the mysteries of the after life brought nearer.

Truth is revealed by each prophet in accordance with the development of the people of the age. Today, Bahá'u'lláh again answers the question ever present in the heart of man: Whence comes the light?

LOULIE A. MATHEWS.

May 23, 1929.

CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword	v
The Báb the Forerunner	1
Bahá'u'lláh the Prophet	18
'Abdu'l-Bahá the Interpreter	37
The New Dimension	59
Essential Principles of Bahá'u'lláh	61
Shoghi Effendi and the Administration	63
Who are the Prophets?	71

Cover designed by George Todd

THE BÁB THE FORERUNNER

PROPHETS of God appear from the darkest regions of earth, amid peoples swayed by ignorance and corruption, but they alone of all men create their environment and are not moulded by it. Moses rose from serfdom, Jesus, from a despised village of Palestine, while the desert of Arabia bore Muḥammad. Today, from out the submerged civilization of Persia comes the prophet Bahá'u'lláh.

Divine revelation is threefold. A Herald bears aloft the flaming announcement that the Day of a Prophet is at hand and calls upon the people to make ready for the Word of the Lord. A Prophet follows charged with dynamic power, whose utterances recreate civilization. The revelation is sealed

by an Interpreter, who makes practical the principles of the Prophet.

The Forerunner of the Bahá'í Era was the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, the Prophet and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Interpreter. With doctrines far in advance of the times they laid the foundation of a new civilization though most of their days were passed in prison.

The date 1844 had been deciphered by thousands of Christians as the appointed time for the reappearance of Christ, whilst the prophecies of the Great Imams foretold that the days of emptiness were drawing to a close. Into this expectant world stepped 'Alí Muḥammad, called the Báb. Báb, meaning door, was a title first conferred by Muḥammad upon his son-in-law 'Alí, the first Imam. When the Báb declared himself he cried: "The door is open. I am the door." Through that Open Door creative power began to flow to mankind, at first imperceptibly, yet quickening with each successive dawn. Sensitive minds awaked. The

lethargy of prejudice and tradition shaken off, men were no longer satisfied to live under the limitations of their forefathers.

The Divine Springtime had blossomed and, step by step, the Promised One advanced to meet his high destiny.

Seyyid 'Alí Muḥammad, the Báb, was born in the year 1819. The city of Shiráz was his cradle. Before memory dawned his father died and his training was entrusted to a maternal uncle, Hájí Seyyid 'Alí, noted for sanctity and for exceptional beauty of character. Hájí guided the infant feet of the Báb, embraced his Cause and for it suffered martyrdom.

As the Arabian youth grew to manhood, beauty and virtue rivaled each other in his person. Even the most blood-thirsty enemy conceded his blameless life and quailed before that radiant countenance—that majestic bearing.

The momentous year of prophecy drew nigh.

On May twenty-third, 1844, the Báb made the announcement that in him prophecy was fulfilled—that God had sent him to prepare the people for the coming of a great prophet. In proof of his station the Báb read from his own book, the Beyán, learned and mighty sayings both in Persian and Arabic. The gathering of holy men to whom he spoke, aware of the youth's meager education, were overwhelmed by the miraculous eloquence of his flaming words and the humility of his bearing. An indefinable charm—an utter simplicity emanated from his personality. His listeners, convinced from the depth of their hearts that he was, indeed, the Gate that opened upon the New Day, accepted him and with one accord scattered throughout Persia, spreading the glad tidings of the appearance of the Promised One upon the date foretold.

These happenings noised abroad reached the ears of the Sháh, who straightway delegated Sey-

yid Yaḥyá, a man venerated among the people, to investigate the matter. Journeying to Shiráz on horseback he interviewed the Báb three times. During the third conference, Seyyid requested a commentary on a certain verse of the Qur'án. This he did as a test of the Báb's power to fulfil the Muḥammadan prophecy that the Twelfth Imám would be endowed with a gift of composing arguments irrefutable before the law and would write with a rapidity no eye could follow. The Báb, in response to Yaḥyá's request, took a pen and without hesitation or reflection wrote a treatise so marvelous that the Seyyid was enthralled. Without consideration of the result to himself, he announced to the Sháh and the divines that the Promised One had appeared.

Amid the outcry and clamor that followed, Mullá Muḥammad 'Alí, the most learned among the doctors, acquainted himself with the writings of the Báb and forthwith gathered into a heap his

own books and treatises and setting them ablaze, cried: "The season of Spring and wine has arrived — search for knowledge after reaching knowledge is unpardonable." Upon hearing of this extraordinary declaration, the Sháh sent a royal command summoning Mullá Muḥammad 'Alí into his presence. This meeting effected nothing except to inflame the hatred of the Muḥammadan leaders who, finding that the message of the Báb continued to spread and imprisonment and torture were unavailing, advised the Governor of Fárs thus: "If thou desirest the extinction of this fire, or seekest a firm stopper for this rent and disruption, an immediate cure and decisive remedy is to kill the Báb."

Greatly concerned for the peace of the province, the ruler ordered the house of Hájí Seyyid 'Alí to be surrounded and at midnight the Báb to be taken prisoner. It was summer. The heat was intolerable and the plague raged so fiercely that the

soldiers fled to the mountains. The Governor, disheartened, had to content himself with sending ʻAlí Muḥammad beyond his jurisdiction.

Traveling from Fárs to Isfahán the Báb lodged in the mansion of Imám-Jumʻa. The ruler of Isfahán, hearing from all sides of the youth's brilliant expositions, determined to visit him. An interview took place. The Báb, penetrating the pure heart of the man, wrote a shining tablet explaining his own station and that of the Prophet who should follow. Fired with zeal, the Governor commanded the doctors of the law to assemble, believing that before indubitable proof they would recognize the Promised One, but the Mullás, sensing the deflation of their own importance and inevitable defeat, declined. So great became the tumult of the city that the Governor trembled for the fate of the Báb, but unwilling to separate himself from this glorious countenance ordered him publicly escorted to Múrché Khúr, a distance of thirty-five

miles beyond the city and, under cover of darkness, brought back and hidden in a portion of the castle known as the Royal Palace of the Sun.

The royal disciple spent four months at the feet of the Báb, absorbed in spiritual light—when suddenly he died.

Gurgín Khán, a nephew who succeeded to the title, knew of the Báb's presence and divulged the secret to the Prime Minister. Although decidedly anxious to be rid of this disurber, the diplomat was wily and did nothing in a hurry. Maturing a plan, he sent for Muḥammad 'Alí, pretending to do him honor by suggesting that he go to the capital, Teherán, under the protection of the royal guard. This was only a ruse. When the party reached an abandoned station on the old Isfahán road, a new order bade them halt at the village of Kalín. Here the Báb made a dignified appeal to the Sháh for an audience, but the Prime Minister counseled against it, saying that where-

ever the Báb went turmoil followed and that it would be conducive to peace to shut him up and send for him at a more opportune moment. At first the Sháh demurred, but finally with his own hand wrote many polite greetings, then: "Since the royal train is on the verge of departure from Teherán, to meet in a befitting manner is impossible. Do you go to Mákú and there abide and rest for a while, engaged in praying for our victorious state . . . " To this letter the Báb made no comment.

The Promised One obediently set out for the fastnesses of Mákú, under a large escort commanded by Muḥammad Beg. Ere long this man became convinced of the station of the Báb but kept it secret, as did each member of the guard, until camping at night in the caravansaries under the stars they revealed their faith one to another as they pressed about him, unwilling to lose a precious moment in his presence even for sleep. As

the party passed through the country-side, peasants left their work and stood with bared heads, awed by the proximity of holiness, and looking back they could be seen pressing their foreheads to his foot-prints in the dust.

Muḥammad Beg was relieved of command at Tabríz and grieved so immoderately at parting from the Arabian youth that he fell ill. Cherishing but one thought—to be near the Báb—as soon as the fever abated he traveled to Mákú. Nor was this soldier the only pilgrim. From every part of Persia thronged the people, pouring through the narrow gateways of the town and dotting the rugged hills and plains with their tents. The gaoler, 'Alí Knaz, was told peremptorily that this state of things could not go on, but he was as a straw before the wind—powerless.

Confinement in the inaccessible castle of Mákú had done nothing to quiet the populace, but had further fomented the movement. It was there-

fore resolved to banish the Báb to the grim prison of Chihríḳ.

In explanation of the strange conduct of the new gaoler, Yaḥyá Khán, the Kurd, it has been said that he dreamed that a great king was approaching. Whether this be true, or whether the miraculous personality of the Báb affected him, he received the holy prisoner as an honored guest, refusing to be seated in his presence. Again, as in the fortress of Mákú, the Báb's influence continued to mount.

The Báb instructed his followers in many particulars concerning 'Him whom God shall manifest.' He told them that nineteen years after the announcement of his own mission the Prophet would declare himself.

Meanwhile, the eminent divines of Tabríz grew more and more restless as the Cause of God spread. From mosque and chapel, in pulpit and public square, they argued and made complaint: "What

false assertions are these? This is a thing to break the back! O people extinguish this fire and forget these words! Alas! Woe to our faith! Woe to our law!" With one acclaim the learned doctors from every district of Persia demanded punishment for this firebrand, and the Prime Minister, fearing for his own favor among the clergy, became their accomplice and brought the Báb before a tribunal in Tabríz. Tradition tells us that in this assembly held behind closed doors the Báb had not a single friend. Muḥammadan chronicles describe him as calm and unmoved in the midst of a frenzied conclave.

The trial was an empty mockery.

Nothing proved, it was decided to scourge him. Here, however, a serious obstacle presented itself —the soldiers refused to inflict punishment. The order having been issued, not to enforce it made authority ridiculous and to save the situation a noble, 'Alí Aṣgher, applied the rods with his own

hand. It was a discouraging exposition. They thrust the Glorious One back into prison.

This episode convinced the Prime Minister that the Báb's influence had spread beyond control. He saw that the authorities feared the people and with his own eye had witnessed the refusal of the soldiers to lift their hands against the youth. He, therefore, determined to put him to death without further consultation. Informed that a regiment of Armenian soldiers, under a Christian commander, was stationed at Urúmíyya, he issued a proclamation reading thus: "Obtain a formal and explicit sentence from the learned doctors of Tabríz who are firm supporters of the church of Jaffa and the impregnable stronghold of the faith. Summon the Armenian regiment of Urúmíyya; suspend the Báb before all the people and give orders for the regiment to fire a volley."

The Báb, knowing that the end of his mission was at hand, placed his tablets and the pen that

had written so many marvelous words in a small chest destined for a certain disciple. When this treasure, having passed almost insurmountable barriers, was placed in the hands of Mullá 'Abdu'l-Karun for whom it was intended, he stated: "I am commanded to deliver this trust to Bahá'u'lláh. More than this ask me not." Importuned by his companions, he drew forth an epistle on azure paper written with the utmost delicacy and firmness; at a little distance the script assumed the form of a man. It contained three hundred and sixty derivations of the word Bahá.

As the day of his release drew nigh, the Báb spoke with the utmost certainty: "I am a letter out of that most mighty book . . . and when He shall appear my true nature, my mysteries, that which is now unanswerable will become evident. The embryo of this religion shall develop through the grades of being and ascent, attain to the station of 'the most comely of forms' and become adorned

with the robe of 'blessed be God' . . . Then thou shalt see the mountains which thou thinkest so solid pass away like the melting of the clouds."

After sentence of death, he who was athirst for the draught of martyrdom was imprisoned in Tabríz for three days. With him were the brothers Áḳá Ḥasan and Áḳá Ḥusayn and Áḳá Muḥammad 'Alí. The Báb, to test the obedience of his companions, argued with them thus: "Would it not be preferable that one of you strangle me than that I should die by the bullets of the enemy?" The brothers protested, but, after a prolonged silence, Áḳá Muḥammad 'Alí said: "If that is your will—I will do it." The Báb made answer: "For thine obedience thou shalt die with me, thy head upon my breast. And this day shalt thou be with me in paradise." The Radiant One turned to the brothers, telling them that they must live for the Cause of God and must deny him. He placed in their hands tablets, precious gems of knowledge, his

legacy, admonishing them to guard above life and death the priceless treasure written to 'Him whom God shall manifest.'

At daybreak came the officials to interrogate the little band. Obedient to the will of the Báb the two faithful amanuenses, turning aside that they might not see the face of their beloved master, renounced him. Concealing the divine tablets, they bore them to the end of their journey and in the fierce persecutions that followed they too attained martyrdom.

As the rising sun streaked the sky with fire, the Light of Persia and the beloved disciple mounted the scaffold.

A thousand eyes gazed upon the martyrs, saw the Armenian soldiers fall into three columns, fire and retreat.

The heavy smoke rolled upward revealing the scene and—behold the Báb and his companion unharmed!

The commander of the platoon, Sám Khán, uncertain whether or not a miracle had stayed the execution, was completely unnerved and withdrew his soldiers, declining to have anything further to do with the matter.

Consternation and fear took possession of the populace. The authorities, greatly alarmed, hurried another regiment to the square. Áḳá Jan Beg ordered the Báb to be suspended again, with 'Alí Muḥammad a little below him in such wise that his head rested upon the breast of the Beloved One. The Báb moved his lips in acquiescence and they fell, riddled with bullets.

Thus, at the age of thirty-one, this Radiant Being shining with the beauty of the Kingdom gave up his life in the Cause of God.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH THE PROPHET

AS IT was written came 'Him whom God shall manifest.' Following the Dawn, the Risen Sun bringing to life a New Day.

It was in Teherán, in the year 1817, that the Light of the World appeared. Ḥusayn 'Alí known throughout the world as Bahá'u'lláh, Glory of God, belonged to the noble family of Núri. His father, though a minister of state, was impoverished by excessive taxation and unable to give Bahá'u'lláh an education befitting his rank. Nevertheless, in childhood his ethical genius startled men of all ages who gathered to listen to his heavenly utterances, held by an irresistible power of attraction.

The inner connection between the Messenger of

God and his Herald cannot be fathomed but the allegiance that brought Christ to the feet of John the Baptist again brought Bahá'u'lláh to the feet of the Báb.

Traveling from city to city, Bahá'u'lláh announced the principles of the Báb—principles that struck at the core of dogmatic Islam—and the fame of his reasoning and the eloquence of his words provoked a turmoil among religious leaders.

The martyrdom of the Báb caused Persia to tremble. Fanatical minds became unbalanced and a Bábís* youth attempted the life of the Sháh. The Sháh was unhurt but this deed brought about a veritable slaughter. A Machiavellian scheme was devised whereby all classes of society were made responsible for the bloodshed of the Bábís. Each division was accountable for a certain number of deaths and it was further signified that the Sháh

---

* Name given to the Bahá'ís before Bahá'u'lláh's manifestation.

would estimate loyalty to his person by the ferocity of torture inflicted on the victims. This plot protected all executioners. Thus thousands of men and women were tortured in the public squares throughout the land.

As soon as news of the attack on the Sháh reached Níyávarán, where Bahá'u'lláh was speaking openly—although twice imprisoned, once undergoing the torture of the bastinado—he mounted horse, rode into the imperial camp, threw down the reins and gave himself up.

An entire regiment was detailed to guard him. Next day the procession moved towards Teherán. The soldiers rudely hurried the prisoner along the road—iron chains impeded every step—a ferocious sun beat upon his bared head. At length the dismal prison of Teherán!

The gaoler led the prisoner down three flights of narrow steps into a dungeon. In this tomb with no other outlet than the door by which they en-

tered were a hundred and fifty men—thieves and assassins. The chains from Bahá'u'lláh's neck and arms were fastened to the ground. Darkness blotted out misery. In the midst of desolation God revealed to Bahá'u'lláh his mission. Quoting his words:* "During the days when I was imprisoned in the land of Ta, although the torment of the chains and the stifling atmosphere allowed me little sleep, still occasionally it befell that upon raising my head, something flowed over my breast, even as a mighty torrent, which descending from the summit of a lofty mountain, distributes itself over the earth. Then all my limbs were aflame. At such moments my tongue repeated what mortal ears could not hear . . . One night of nights, in a dream, these supreme words saluted me from all sides: 'Verily, we shall make thee victorious by thyself, and by thy pen. Sorrow not for that which

---

* The Epistle to the Son of the Wolf: Chanler Translation.

has befallen thee, and have no fear. Truly thou art of those who are secure. Ere long the Lord shall send forth and reveal the treasures of the earth.' "

. . . . "Oh Sháh, in truth I was as an ordinary man asleep upon my couch, when the breezes of the Most Glorious passed over me, giving understanding of that which has been. This thing is not from me, but from One mighty and all-knowing. He it was who ordered me to sound the Proclamation between earth and heaven. . . . . I have not studied science, nor have I entered college. . . . This is a leaf which the breezes have stirred. Can it be still when the rushing winds blow? . . . His imperial command it was, which obliged me to speak for His celebration among the nations."

After four months Bahá'u'lláh was brought before a tribunal. Nothing could be proved against him, but the authorities, apprehending the influ-

ence of this fearless leader, banished him from Persia. With family and retainers Bahá'u'lláh was exiled to Baghdád. He did not speak concerning the station God had revealed but set about instructing the Bábís in peace and non-retaliation. Every household mourned a martyr and the Blessed Perfection counseled: "If ye be slain for his good pleasure, verily, it is better for ye than that ye slay." Thus he turned the hearts of the people from revenge towards true victory.

A year passed.

From every side strife and confusion pressed upon the Illumined One. Now he withdrew to the wilderness of Kurdistán* for the space of two years. It was a land of desolation avoided by travelers; only occasional wild shepherds led their flocks over the gray rocks. Food and water were scarce. Winter winds whipped the ground and the pitiless summer sun cast no shadows. A cave be-

* Sulaymániyyih.

came the Prophet's resting place and the bare mountain top his temple.

In solitude Bahá'u'lláh experienced true joy. The precious tablet of the Báb rested upon him like a mantle—a mantle beneath which the world was to be sheltered.

Bahá'u'lláh turned from life as an expression of personal will and advanced with outstretched arms to meet the destiny ordained by God.

Now the days of waiting were accomplished. Coming down from the mountain the Blessed Perfection pitched his tent in a flowering garden on the slopes of the river Tigris. Here in full majesty, nineteen years after the Báb's proclamation, Bahá'u'lláh announced himself as 'Him whom God shall manifest.'

Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, like Christ's, were far in advance of the times and endangered orthodox Muḥammadan theology. His princely rank alone saved him from death. As a compromise, it was

decided to transfer the faithful band from Baghdád to Constantinople, but in spite of every precaution enthusiasm for the new doctrines spread and waxed strong. Again the officials became uneasy.

Bahá'u'lláh was next driven to Adrianople and finally sentenced to the penal city of 'Akká for life. As all but a scattered and unknown few of the Bábís had been martyred, the government believed that this banishment of seventy would completely annihilate the movement. How little did they realize the divine plan!

When sentenced to 'Akká, Bahá'u'lláh had already been fifteen years in exile. Each decree had driven the faithful ones further and further from their native land, Persia. Imagination quails as it pictures the long marches into exile! Four months in the rigors of winter with scant food and clothing brought them to Baghdád. These horrors were repeated during the journey from Baghdád

to Constantinople. Although the distance from Constantinople to Adrianople was traversed in a week they nearly perished from exposure to a raging snowstorm — while the journey from Adrianople to Gallipoli and thence to Palestine was in the tropical heat of August.

The city of 'Akká, toward which the Oppressed One now set sail, was used by Persia and Turkey for political prisoners and served the definite purpose of ridding these governments of men whose lives they feared to take. It was of evil repute. Birds flying above its fever-ridden marshes were known to drop dead, while the stagnant water was a harbinger of death. Bahá'u'lláh speaks of it as "The metropolis of the owl."

After Bahá'u'lláh's arrival in Palestine, however, the gulf stream by degrees changed its course, sweeping away the rotting banks of seaweed from the sands and re-charging the deadened atmosphere. The beauty and comfort of Palestine

were further made possible by piping water from the mountains; this was first accomplished in 'Akká at the suggestion of Bahá'u'lláh and later, in Jerusalem by the English. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in 1914, drew a picture of the future of 'Akká and Haifa in these words:* "This semi-circular bay will be transformed into the finest harbor, wherein the ships of all nations will seek shelter. Hither will come thousands of men and women from every part of the globe. The mountain and the plain will be dotted with villas and palaces. Industries will be established, as well as institutions of learning and philanthropy. Wonderful gardens, orchards, groves and parks will spring up everywhere. At night the great city will be lighted by electricity. The entire harbor from 'Akká to Haifa will be a path of illumination. Powerful searchlights will be placed on either side of Mount Carmel to guide the steamers. Mount Carmel

---

* Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era: Esselmont.

itself will be submerged in a sea of light."

* * * *

In Persia, followers of the Light of the World were asking each other: "Where is he hidden?" Their hearts were much oppressed. At length came the dire news of imprisonment in 'Akká! 'Akká! Whence none returned.

Unable to bear the separation and fearing lest even now they would arrive too late, pilgrims set out on foot.

After months of travel and hardship the city came in sight, but its gates were closed against them. Standing on a plain beyond the third moat, Bahá'u'lláh's prison window could be seen and folds of white raiment as he raised his arm in blessing. Cherishing this silent communion they turned and re-crossed the frontiers. Then it was, to comfort the believers, that Bahá'u'lláh made the promise: "Fear not, these doors shall be opened. My tent shall be pitched upon Mount Carmel and

the utmost joy be realized." And this came to pass.

The power of God alone sustains and suffices the prophets enabling them to spread His Message notwithstanding man's persecution. From a hillside in Judea, Jesus overturned the Roman Empire —speaking to a humble few, the whole world harkened. From narrow cells of unfriendly stone without the comfort of the sky above him, Bahá'u'lláh declared that he was a Messenger of God; sent to explain the holy books of all religions and to prove the oneness of their message; to unify mankind and bring about the Most Great Peace.

The Illumined One sent forth mighty letters that crumbled falsehood, announcing to kings and potentates the advent of a New Day, a great New Era. He warned Napoleon III, Kaiser Frederick III and the Czar Alexander II that their thrones would fall. He wrote Pius IX that the temporal power of the Popes was waning and the Turkish

Sultan, 'Abdu'l-Azíz, that his régime would be overturned. With the Sháh, Muzaffaru'd-Din, he pleaded the cause of the oppressed. Even as far as these United States a tablet was sent to President Grant containing these words: "Adorn the temple of your dominion with the embroidered garment of justice and virtue."

The creative word of the Prophet reverberated around the world, pulses quickened, pure hearts took courage. This radiant message penetrated the sensitive mind of the saint, the scientist and the poet. Each interpreted it in his own language. Peace and good will again heralded a new spiritual springtime.

Only one occidental looked upon the face of Bahá'u'lláh—the famous Professor E. G .Browne. He thus narrates his memorable impression:* "The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those pierc-

* A Traveller's Narrative: E. G. Browne.

ing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and majesty sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age that the jet-black hair . . . seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain."

The story of prison doors flung open during the last years of Bahá'u'lláh's life is in itself an epic, here but briefly told.

One day, after long years of rigid confinement, Bahá'u'lláh exclaimed: "I have not gazed on any green thing for nine years. The country is the world of the soul, the city is the world of the body." When these words reached the ears of 'Abdu'l-Bahá he knew that the time for fulfilment of prophecy was at hand and that Bahá'u'lláh's days in the Most Great Prison were drawing to a close.

North of the city of 'Akká was a palace falling into ruin, surrounded by gardens interlaced with running brooks. It was owned by a Muḥammadan named Páshá Ṣafwat who was unfriendly to the cause of Bahá'u'lláh. Nevertheless, 'Abdu'l-Bahá sought him and asked if Mazra'ih could be leased for a small sum of money. At first the man refused then, abruptly changing his mind, consented. 'Abdu'l-Bahá determined to visit the palace, despite repeated injunctions that prisoners must not journey beyond the city walls. Accordingly, one morning he set out, passing the gates doubly guarded by sentinels. None molested him. Walking the distance of four miles, he reached the palace of Mazra'ih. The roof had fallen in and the garden was but a tangle, yet the beauty of the place was apparent. He immediately set about making the necessary repairs.

Notwithstanding the strict command that forbade 'Abdu'l-Bahá from associating with his

father, when all was in readiness he went to the Blessed Beauty, pleading: "The palace of Mazra'ih is ready. Will you come?" Slowly Bahá'u'lláh replied: "I am a prisoner." The Master persisted but, as often as the entreaty was made, his father answered: "I cannot. I am a prisoner." 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in no way discouraged, set the whole matter before a certain Muḥammadan Shaykh who dearly loved Bahá'u'lláh, counseling him in this wise: "Go to-night, into His Holy Presence, fall on your knees, take hold of his hands and do not forbear until he promises to leave the city." Accordingly, at nightfall, the Shaykh went to Bahá-'u'lláh and sitting close beside him took hold of his hands, beseeching: "Why will you not come away?" Again Bahá'u'lláh replied: "I am a prisoner." The friend lovingly kissed his hands and cried out: "God forbid. Who has the power to make of you a prisoner? I beg of you to come to the palace. It is beautiful and verdant there. The

trees are in leaf and the oranges like balls of fire!" For a whole hour the Shaykh besought him and would not desist until Bahá'u'lláh bowed his head in acquiescence: "So be it."

The consent of Bahá'u'lláh left but one obstacle to overcome. How should the four miles be traversed? After so many years of confinement would the prisoner be able to go on foot? 'Abdu'l-Bahá searched 'Akká and Haifa until at length an old carriage was unearthed, its parts assembled and in it they drove to Bahjí, unmolested. Alone the Master returned to the prison.

The Prophet of God remained in these lovely surroundings two years. Suddenly an epidemic broke out and the country-side was deserted. Thus the family was enabled to buy for a song a certain house in another part of Bahjí. Here the prisoner came and dwelt. Near by was a garden—the Garden of Ridván—the place of destiny. This space of flowers on the shores of Palestine is our

heritage. Here the sun patterns bright leaves on white paths and night draws perfume from the jasmine and the rose. The ancient Persian saying becomes a reality: "Blessed is the one who visits 'Akká and blessed is the one who has visited the Visitor of 'Akká."

The promise of long ago was now fulfilled. Bahá'u'lláh often withdrew to Mount Carmel for prayer and the deathless stars beheld a radiance ascending from earth to heaven.

The bestowals of God through His Prophet emerged and took their ordered places in the universe. Bahá'u'lláh had poured light upon mankind for seventy-five years. As the appointed hour for the withdrawal of his spirit approached, he placed the lamp of guidance in the hand of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, saying: "Verily, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is Myself; the shining place of My Identity; the east of My Cause, the heaven of My Bounty; the sea of My Will, the lamp of My Guidance, the

path of My Justice, and the standard of My Love."

Sent by God with a message of truth, Bahá'u'lláh remained a prey to man's ignorance all the days of his life. Nevertheless, his majesty could not be hidden and his nobility compelled universal recognition. Prisoner of two despots, the Servant of God fearlessly rebuked them. Rulers of Palestine humbly begged the honor of attaining an audience with him whom they had imprisoned. All creatures, from the highest to the lowest, bore witness to the fact that Bahá'u'lláh, though subject to man, was in reality a king of kings.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ THE INTERPRETER

ANCIENT prophecy unfolded in a single golden hour. For on the twenty-third of May in 1844 an Arabian youth cried the glad tidings of a Prophet come to earth—the Servant of God was born—while science in the western world flashed over vibrant wires the message: "See what God hath wrought."

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Servant of God, was a title given 'Abbás Effendi eldest son of Bahá'u'lláh, he who was destined to tread the path of martyrdom at the side of the Prophet and to carry aloft the light of his Message.

When scarcely eight years old the serenity of childhood was rudely shaken by persecution and massacre. Astonished eyes beheld an infuriated

mob sack and destroy his home and childish ears were filled with rumors of torture inflicted on friend and neighbor. Time was freighted with anguish.

Once the child saw his father while yet imprisoned in Teherán, the beloved figure weighted with chains — emaciated — almost unrecognized. The horror etched upon his sensitive heart in that moment was never effaced. Days dragged on. A full season passed before Bahá'u'lláh was brought to a secret trial. Faith alone sustained the anxious ones. Relief—even joy accompanied the sentence of exile. What mattered the long journey to Baghdád, the farewell to familiar haunts of childhood—the native land 'Abdu'l-Bahá was never to see again! The loved ones were reunited!

Baghdád, city of romance, cast the first shadow of exile—a shadow that was to envelop the life of the Servant of God. In the strange country, throngs sought Bahá'u'lláh's wisdom; in all duties

'Abdu'l-Bahá helped his father. And often the child was to be found in the mosques discoursing and astounding the learned doctors.

While Bahá'u'lláh was in the wilderness the boy grew more and more thoughtful, devoting long hours to meditation and prayer and assuming grave responsibilities.

The interval of mystic contemplation ended, Bahá'u'lláh descended the mountain.

Nineteen years had passed since the Báb proclaimed the advent of a Prophet. Again it was May with its carpet of flowers, the crescent moon shimmered in the waters of the Tigris and the tent of Bahá'u'lláh was pitched in the fragrant garden of Ridván. Groups of thoughtful believers pressed about him—among them Kurratu'l-'Ayn, a woman of noble birth, a favored disciple of the Báb.

The Prophet, majestic against the beauty of the night, speaking as one sent by God, announced

himself as 'Him whom God would manifest'. 'Abdu'l-Bahá listened to the momentous declaration he was the first to hear—the declaration his heart had already foretold.

Kurratu'l-'Ayn, throwing aside the veil of tradition, cried aloud: "Verily, the trumpet you are expecting—it is I! The bell for which you are listening—it is I! I am the sounding bugle in the name of truth! The King of might hath appeared! Behold the resplendent light! Harken to the melodies of the New Age! Partake of the New Life that is being infused into every existing thing."

As the spiritual fire of the Bahá'í message increased, the Mullábs met and discussed how best to stamp out the conflagration. "Let us demand a miracle," they cried. To their astonishment Bahá'u'lláh consented—whereupon the Mullábs refused. A panic ensued among the doctors of law. Secret conclaves were held and the episode of the miracle added another strand of hatred. The

gates of Baghdád closed against him.
Bahá'u'lláh was next banished to Constantinople.

During the long march 'Abdu'l-Bahá rode beside the camel of his father and guarded his tent by night. Now he was addressed by the household as Master and often referred to by Bahá'u'lláh as 'The Branch'. When the final decree of exile was pronounced, the youth had entered manhood.

The Most Great Prison of 'Akká received Bahá-'u'lláh and eighty-four followers. Crowded into two small rooms, sickness from exhaustion and privation rapidly spread among them. Only 'Abdu'l-Bahá and one other were able to minister to their needs. Life was desolate—yet sadness did not lie at the hearts of these brave disciples.

Twice twelve months passed. Suddenly the barracks were commandeered for a detachment of Turkish soldiers and the exiles were removed.

The family was then confined in two rooms near by; one allotted to Bahá'u'lláh, while thirteen

men, women and children were crowded together in the other. Thus they lived for nine years! Gradually, however, the severe restrictions imposed by the imperial firmans were left in abeyance and after a number of years a little more space was added to their meager habitation.

Into these rude quarters came Fatima, daughter of Mírzá Muḥammad 'Alí Nahri, destined to become the wife of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Her lineage flowed from two pure sources; in direct descent from Muḥammad through her father, while her great-grandmother was an Indian princess of royal blood. Inheriting vast wealth, her grandfather constructed an aqueduct to bring water from the mountains of Najaf and the name Nahri (stream of water) was conferred upon the family. Her father and one brother responded to the call of the Báb and ardently espoused his Cause. This heretical departure stamped them as infidels under the Muḥammadan law and enabled the ambitious

members of the family to seize the entire fortune. The girl's young life was sapped by persecutions and stormy happenings, but under the stress of circumstance lay a divine destiny revealed in this wise:

While on a pilgrimage to Mecca a mysterious tablet was thrust into the hand of the brother who companioned her. At once they recognized the writing of 'Aga Ján, known throughout Persia as the pen of Bahá'u'lláh, and when alone breathlessly opened the precious document. It contained instructions to remain in Jedda until the departure of all the pilgrims—then to set out for Alexandria. Upon reaching Egypt they were directed to embark on an Austrian steamer calling at the port of 'Akká and to remain on the boat until a messenger arrived.

Anchored in the harbor of 'Akká no messenger appeared!

The anxious hours of waiting were spent in

prayer. Night fell. As the anchor was weighed, the promised escort loomed out of the darkness.

This journey fraught with danger and suspense ended in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, whose first words were: "We have brought you into the Prison at a time when the door of meeting is closed to all believers. This is for no other reason than to prove to everyone the Power and Might of God."

The family of Kaleem received the young girl. One day the master of the house returned from the presence of the Blessed Beauty, great happiness shining from his countenance, saying: "I have brought a most wonderful gift for you. It is this: a new name has been given you and that name is 'Moneereh' (Illumined One)." Instantly remembrance flashed that one called Moneereh would become the wife of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

In this wise her destiny came to pass.

Moneereh writes of her marriage: "If I were to

set down the details of the fifty years of my association with the Beloved of the world, of his love, his mercy and bounty, I would need fifty years more of time and opportunity, yet, were the seas of the world turned into ink, and the leaves of the forest into paper, I could not render adequate justice to the subject."

Today, under the shadow of Mount Carmel, Moneereh and four daughters minister to pilgrims from all parts of the world. Here too is the noble figure of Bahíyyih Khanum, addressed as the 'Greatest Holy Leaf'. Daughter of Bahá'u'lláh, she was born to a heritage of affliction which challenges description. Loving servitude became her calling and the sanctity of her life will shine as a beacon down the ages.

* * * *

After 'Abdu'l-Bahá's marriage, life in 'Akká continued as of old. The Master poured himself out in tender devotion to his father and guarded his

hours of prayer and meditation from intrusion. Calumnies were dispelled in the radiance of the Servant of God who ever accented unity, while darts of hatred were deflected by an armor of love. The principles of Bahá'u'lláh were mirrored in every act of the Master's life.

The imprisonment and cruelty accorded the Messengers of God seem to represent the hardened heart and unawakened conscience of humanity, while the joyous freedom of Bahá'u'lláh's last years in Bahjí foreshadow a coming millenium.

What infinite happiness must have been reflected from 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the heavenly days near the garden of Ridván!

The Master who had lived at the feet of a divine being was called upon to experience separation from the Beloved—to endure the crowning sorrow of the loss of Bahá'u'lláh, the ascension of whose spirit was as the withdrawal of the sun, paling the beauty of creation.

The Branch became the Centre of the Covenant. 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke of his own station in these words: "My name is 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Servant of God, my reality is 'Abdu'l-Bahá, my praise is 'Abdu'l-Bahá . . . No name, no title, no mention, no commendation hath he or will ever have save 'Abdu'l-Bahá."

Thus he describes his spiritual mission: "All my thoughts are centred about the proclamation of the kingdom of God. I have a lamp in my hand searching through the lands and through the seas to find souls to herald the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. Day and night am I engaged in this work. I enter all meetings, all churches, all religions that the Cause may spread. Men must leave the important in life for that which is more important. You must die to yourself and the world so that you may be born again to the kingdom of heaven. Behold the candle how it gives its light. It weeps its life away drop by drop in order to give its flame of

light."

It was the wish of Bahá'u'lláh that a tomb should be built on Mount Carmel as the final resting place of the Báb, whose remains had been hidden by devoted disciples these many long years. Accordingly 'Abdu'l-Bahá commenced this work, but the authorities fearing the concealment of arms closed prison doors, shutting out freedom for seven years. Then like a mist restrictions melted away and the Master completed the tomb.

At this time many pilgrims came to 'Akká. As a host 'Abdu'l-Bahá's genius shone. In his presence caste did not exist—prejudice of Jew and Gentile, Muḥammadan and Hindu became less than a memory. He conveyed a happiness to the heart—thrilling and real—a happiness the world knows nothing of. To the proffered sympathy of pilgrims he replied: "There is no prison save the prison of self." And smilingly added, "Prisons rest me." In a tablet the Master wrote: "Grieve not because

of my imprisonment and calamity for this prison is my beautiful garden, my mansioned paradise, and my throne of dominion among mankind."

Thornton Chase, the first American to embrace the Cause, writes from 'Akká thus: "We remained within those walls, prisoners with him who dwells in that Greatest Prison . . . No wish, no desire is there, save the good of mankind, the peace of the world, the acknowledgement of the Fatherhood of God and the mutual rights of His children. Indeed, the real prison . . is outside of these stone walls, within is freedom and the pure aura of the spirit."

In 1907 the Turkish government sent four officials, headed by Aríz Bey, to interrogate 'Abdu'l-Bahá with the intention of putting him to death. He received this news with radiant acquiescence. Firmly denying the charges preferred against him, 'Abdu'l-Bahá expressed entire willingness to meet death if the tribunal so ordained. The Italian

consul came forward and offered safe conduct to foreign ports but the Master declined, saying that neither the Báb nor Bahá'u'lláh fled his enemies, nor should he. Daily rounds among the poor were quietly continued and chanting God's praise he calmly awaited the end. The officials reached their native land as a revolution broke over Turkey. The old régime crumbled before the onslaught of the Young Turks and instead of destroying 'Abdu'l-Bahá the envoys were forced to flee for their own lives. 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd who had sent them to 'Akká was bound in chains.

The first act of the Modernists was to free religious and political prisoners throughout the Ottoman Empire. And thus in the year 1908, at the age of sixty-six, the holy prisoner became a free man. As a free man, he continued a life of ceaseless activity, making but one change—leaving 'Akká and henceforth dwelling in Haifa.

People of all lands and creeds besought 'Abdu'l-

Bahá to visit the West and yielding to their entreaties he set sail for England. Arriving in London, September 3rd, 1911, his greeting was: "The magnet of your love has brought me to this country. I was tired when I went on board the steamer but when I reached London your great love refreshed me." 'Abdu'l-Bahá's radiant figure adorned the pulpits of the ancient churches as well as the platforms of modern thought—everywhere he explained the gift of God to this enlightened age.

Crossing the English Channel, the Master gave three months of his precious time to spreading the Cause in Paris and then returned to the East, reaching Ramley, a suburb of Cairo, at Christmas.

The following spring brought him to the United States. Traveling from coast to coast, he set in motion the principles of Bahá'u'lláh, evinced in the Fourteen Points used by the League of Nations and to be found today in every purposeful movement. The disarmament of governments by gen-

eral agreement was advocated from every platform. 'Abdu'l-Bahá pointed out that legislative administration was not an affair of politics, influence and money but a spiritual function. He stated that work, as well as prayer and meditation, was a form of true worship. He taught that independent search for truth clarifies thought and that true freedom is found in severance from personal desire. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stressed that faith and science, formerly considered separate forces, were in reality the wings of the bird of humanity—both necessary to its flight.

After seven months of incessant teaching and speaking throughout the United States, 'Abdu'l-Bahá sailed for England in December, 1912. Here he watered the spiritual seed already planted and extended his travels as far as Scotland.

The beginning of the new year found the Master again in Paris. Each morning he gave informal talks at his apartment, 30 rue St. Didier, and as

the guest of a Theological Seminary answered questions concerning the Bahá'í faith. Pasteur Monnier asked: "What relation does the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh bear to that of Christ?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied: "The foundation of the religion of God is one. The same basis which Christ laid down and which had been forgotten was renewed by Bahá'u'lláh."

'Abdu'l-Bahá remained in Paris two months and then continuing his travels visited Stuttgart, Budapest and Vienna, arriving in Egypt late in May.

Now the Master was in his seventieth year. His long and arduous labors culminating in these years of travel had sapped his strength and worn out his powerful frame.

The World War that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had so accurately foretold was now at hand. He had frequently referred to it both in Europe and America. While in California in 1912 he said: "We are on

the eve of the battle of Armageddon referred to in the sixteenth chapter of Revelations. The time is two years hence when but a spark will set aflame the whole of Europe." And again: "Today the continent of Europe is like an arsenal.—The whole of Europe will be set aflame, as has been prophesied in the Book of Daniel and by St. John.—A tremendous conflict is at hand.—In 1917 kingdoms will fall and cataclysms will rock the earth."

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá reached the Holy Land in the December of 1913, with piercing insight he organized vast plantings near Tiberius and harvested the grain. Thus, when 'Akká and Haifa were cut off from supplies it was he who fed the people. Following the British occupation of Palestine, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was knighted in recognition of his far-seeing wisdom. This honor was favored with his gracious acceptance in the tranquil spirit ever shown toward temporal affairs.

It was the Master's custom to distribute alms each Friday and to give to those in need from his

own scanty store. A motley crowd of wretched beings—hungry—shivering—waited in the court-yard. Placing coins in each outstretched palm, speaking glowing words, the Master infused these forsaken ones with new life. Nor did his care of the people relax as death approached.

A lifetime of service was crowded into 'Abdu'l-Bahá's last days on earth. It seemed as though his heart could not contain the love that overflowed even to the birds of the air and the flowers of the field.

For well nigh thirty years Ismá'íl Áqá had been the gardener. Vividly does he recall the Master's last visit to the garden. For a long time the Beloved One seemed in a deep reverie—finally calling him, he said: "For your sake will I eat of this fruit." Whilst the gardener plucked sweet lemons the Master walked to the tree: "Nay, but I must gather them with my own hands." Having eaten of the fruit, 'Abdu'l-Bahá questioned: "Do you

desire anything more?" Then raising his hands with a pathetic gesture, he repeated slowly, touchingly: "Now it is finished, it is finished!" These significant words pierced the heart of the faithful one like a knife.

Ismá'íl Áqá understood.

A servant in the house was betrothed and 'Abdu'l-Bahá pressed forward the marriage that he might bless it with his presence.

On the last morning the Master arose early to chant and pray as was his wont. Although he did not attend the feast given that afternoon by a Parsi pilgrim on Mount Carmel, he sent the friends. Returning, one exclaimed: "The giver of the feast was unhappy because you were not present." 'Abdu'l-Bahá smiled: "But I was there, though my body was absent, my spirit was in your midst—the friends must not attach any importance to the absence of my body. In spirit I am, and shall always be, with the friends, even

though I be far away."

As night fell the Beloved inquired for the health of each member of the household and of the pilgrims and friends in Haifa. Hearing that none were ill, he remarked quietly: "Very good. Very good."

The hours grew short.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's thoughtful care penetrated every need. He urged the family to take their rest, assuring them that he required nothing. Nevertheless, two of his daughters remained near and at midnight one entered the room with a little nourishment. As it was offered, the Master's clear voice rang out: "You wish me to take food and I am going?"

Casting about him a radiant glance of love, with the cloak of Bahá'u'lláh spread over him, the Servant of God finished his labors in the vineyard of the Lord and passed forever from the sight of men.

"The eyes that had always looked with loving kindness upon humanity, whether friend or foe, were now closed. The hands that had ever been stretched forth to give alms to the poor, and the needy, the halt, and the maimed, the blind, the orphan and the widow, had finished their labor. The feet that with untiring zeal had gone upon the ceaseless errands of the Lord were now at rest. The lips that had so eloquently championed men were now hushed in silence. The heart that had throbbed with wondrous love for the children of God was stilled." *

Well may we say with the Christian minister who gave testimony at the grave of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Oh bitter is the anguish caused by this heart-rending calamity. It is not only our loss but a world affliction. For well nigh eighty years he hath lived the life of the Messenger and the Apostle of God."

---

* The Bahá'í World.

THE NEW DIMENSION

THE direct rays of these great world teachers —the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá —were focused upon humanity for a hundred years with the resultant quickening of life on every plane.

When Bahá'u'lláh was born we had neither a telegraph wire nor a motor car—we read by flickering candles and dim oil lamps. Groups of people lived as separate units knowing neither steamboat nor train but communicating with each other by slow stage-coach and uncertain sailing vessels.

Today, through the creative power of the prophets we live in a new era—in a new dimension. We ride through the air and from it draw music. Sounds and colors are brought from far off lands

and knowledge of happenings at the equator and the poles. From every realm comes light flooding man's daily life. By the power of God revealed through the prophets man receives the impetus to press forward to new goals.

The spiritual light brought by the Prophet of today will penetrate man's inner reality as it has already penetrated his physical environment.

ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

UNFETTERED search after truth. Abandonment of superstition and prejudice.

The oneness of mankind. "All are leaves of one tree, flowers in one garden."

Religion must be the cause of harmony and love, else it is not religion.

All religions are one in fundamental principles.

Religion must conform with science. Faith and reason must be in full accord.

Universal Peace: the establishment of a universal League of Nations, of international arbitration and an international parliament.

The adoption of an auxiliary international lan-

guage, which shall be taught in every school throughout the world.

Compulsory education for all and special advantages for girls, who will become the first educators of the next generation.

Equal opportunity of development and equal rights and privileges for both sexes.

Work for all: no idle rich, no idle poor. Work in the spirit of service is worship.

Prejudice of all kinds must be forgotten.

SHOGHI EFFENDI
AND THE ADMINISTRATION*

THE thoughtful student wonders how the lofty principles of Bahá'u'lláh are made practical.

Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá direct us to three channels through which these principles may reach the individual. 'Abdu'l-Bahá left a Guardian of the Cause in the person of his grandson, Shoghi Effendi, whose function is to keep pure the written word and counsel the entire Bahá'í world. Concerning the Guardian, 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes these tender words: "O ye faithful ones of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! It is incumbent upon you to take the greatest care of Shoghi Effendi, the twig that hath

---

* Substance taken from The Bahá'í World. See page 69, Chapter on Administration, by Horace Holley.

branched from the tree of the two hallowed and divine Lote Trees, that no dust of despondency and sorrow may stain his radiant nature, that, day by day, he may wax greater in happiness, in joy and spirituality. For he is after 'Abdu'l-Bahá the Guardian of the Cause of God."

Shoghi Effendi, still a young man, studied at Oxford and now lives with members of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's family in Haifa. From this center he guides and directs the believers, not as one set above another, but as a true brother and co-worker. In every quarter of the globe whatever concerns them is his direct care. His function is unique—his responsibility without limit.

The second channel is to be a Universal House of Justice which will assist the Guardian in his manifold activities, and the third, assemblies national and local—destined as models for world consultation.

A Bahá'í community is so deeply laid and broadly extended that it includes every sincere soul and shuts the gate of fellowship on no one. To enter the Bahá'í movement in its fullest concept is to leave behind all exclusive ideas—an experience which at first exposes one to new trials and sufferings, as the human ego revolts against the supreme practice of universal love. Here the scientist must associate with the unlearned, the rich with the poor, the white with the colored, the mystic with the literalist and the Christian with the followers of all religions—and on terms that remove the privileges and advantages of traditional precedents and presumptions. But for this difficult experience there are glorious compensations. Such association removes fear; the banishment of fear liberates stifled and latent powers. Spiritual love vitalizes man, his expression becomes freer, his imagination more creative.

A Bahá'í community is a gathering where the

flower of unity slowly unfolds.

In the Bahá'í Administration the student will observe the complete reconciliation of the opposed claims of democratic freedom and unanswerable authority. Bahá'í believers having knowledge and ability may teach but they exercise no authority over the individual conscience. All questions relative to the Cause are presented to a spiritual assembly—a body of nine elected annually in each community. Bahá'í authority is measured by self-sacrifice and not by arbitrary power. Not to enhance the prestige of the few, but to upbuild the individual believer in his own community is the genius of the Bahá'í Movement.

A striking feature is an entire absence of salaried clergy. The religious conception is one which combines mysticism—the sacred personal experience—with practical morality.

The inherent necessity of the Bahá'í Cause to bring its administration into the hands best fitted

for its work will move the believers, through spiritual power, to defer to those of larger and still larger vision. The result must be an inevitable improvement in the qualities placed at the service of the Cause, until the highest attributes of humanity are enrolled. This age will witness the fulfilment of that strange, cryptic saying: "The meek shall inherit the earth."

Bahá'u'lláh's far flung principles are being absorbed into the consciousness of humanity. The crucible into which opinions and actions must be poured is the law of consultation in which gold is freed from alloy. This law is the touchstone of spiritual alchemy and as Bahá'u'lláh tells us the new age will rest upon the pillars of Consultation and Kindness.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's words shed light on the spirit of this law:

"The prime requisites for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit,

detachment from all else save God . . . In this day, assemblies of consultation are of the greatest importance and a vital necessity . . . The members thereof must take counsel together in such wise that no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise. This can be attained when every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should any one oppose, he must on no account feel hurt, for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed. The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions."

The letters of Shoghi Effendi evince profound wisdom and devotion to the Cause. The following are a few excerpts from his messages:

"I need not dwell upon what I have already reiterated and emphasized that the administration of the Cause is to be conceived as an instrument and not a substitute for the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, that it should be regarded as a channel through

which His promised blessings may flow, that it should guard against such rigidity as would clog and fetter the liberating forces released by His Revelation."

"The Bahá'ís must do their utmost to extend at all times the helping hand to the poor, the sick, the disabled, the orphan, the widow, irrespective of color, caste or creed. They must promote by every means in their power the material as well as the spiritual enlightenment of youth."

"The friends must bend every effort to promote the interests of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár,* and hasten the day when the work of this glorious Edifice will have been consummated."

"I need not enlarge at the present moment upon what I have stated in the past, that contributions to the local and national Funds are of a purely voluntary character."

---

* A temple for all religions on the shore of Lake Michigan.

"Not by the force of numbers, not by the exposition of a set of new and noble principles, not by an organized campaign of teaching, no matter how world-wide and elaborate its character—not even by the staunchness of our faith or the exaltation of our enthusiasm, can we ultimately hope to vindicate in the eyes of a critical and sceptical age the supreme claim of the Abha Revelation. One thing, and only one thing, will unfailingly and alone secure the undoubted triumph of this sacred Cause, namely the extent to which our inner lives and private characters mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendor of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh."

WHO ARE THE PROPHETS?

What is truth?

"Truth is the revealed Word of God."

'Abdu'l-Bahá.

What is religion?

"Religion is the love of God in the heart of man expressed through service."

'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Do the founders of the great religions differ?

"All the great prophets have served the selfsame foundation. They have served the same reality. Hence, the purpose and result of all the prophets have been one and the same. They were the advancement of the body politic. They were the

cause of the honor of mankind. They were the Divine civilizations of man, whose foundation is one. For the fundamental basis of the religion of God there is no change nor variation."

'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Who was Jesus?

"Jesus was a Manifestation of God. Everything of Him pertained to God. To know Him was to know God. To love Him was to love God. To obey Him was to obey God. He was the source of all divine virtues. He was a vision of all divine qualities. In this vision the light of the Sun of Reality was reflected to the world. Through this mirror the Energy of God was transmitted to the world. The whole disc of the Sun of Reality was reflected in Him."

'Abdu'l-Bahá.

How do the Bahá'í revelators speak of the station of Bahá'u'lláh?

"The Beyán* is today in the stage of seed, but in the day of 'Him whom God shall manifest' (Bahá'u'lláh) it will arrive at the degree of fruition."

THE BÁB.

"Bahá'u'lláh is the promised one who has come in the name of God. Verily, Bahá'u'lláh is the stored treasure, the hidden mystery . . . He has opened the doors—the minds and souls through the key of his supreme pen."

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ.

"Yes, my Lord has conferred an order upon me and made me one of His Messengers . . . The most glorious Bell has appeared in the Temple and the

---

* The Báb's own book.

fingers of the will of your Lord are ringing it from the kingdom of eternity . . . If you turn toward creation with a spiritual ear, you will hear: 'The Eternal has arrived in supreme glory!' All things praise God in gratitude. God has sent One fortified by the Holy Spirit to show you the light which was shining from the horizon of the will of your Lord, the Supreme, the Glorious."

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH.

Are the Prophets identical with the Creator?

No. "God singly and alone abideth in His Own Place, which is holy above space and time, mention and utterance, sign, description and definition, height and depth, and, none know HIM save whosoever hath knowledge of His Book." (Meaning the prophets and their teaching.)

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH.

Does reason sustain the belief that the Creator descends to earth?

No. The creator may not become the created; the infinite, finite nor the greater ever be contained in the lesser. Bahá'u'lláh says: "He is purified from being comprehended by men of comprehension and is exalted above the knowing of men of knowledge. The road is barred, and search thereof is rejected." Our only connection with the Infinite Deity is through the prophets whose souls are sufficiently pure to reflect Truth and transmit it according to our capacity and understanding.

Do the Prophets differ physically from other men?

Yes. A prophet's entity is in complete harmony. Through the law of evolution, the highest and purest elements are drawn together in the body of man. Bahá'u'lláh poetically refers to the substance of their being as 'the diamond, the rose and the nightingale.'

What distinguishes a Prophet from a wise and holy man?

The knowledge of a prophet is innate — he teaches man, is not taught by him. The prophet appears at a time prophesied by previous Messengers and his coming fulfils the promises of all religions. He is announced by a Herald and followed by an Interpreter. Though of ancient and even royal lineage he never occupies an exalted station nor exercises worldly power. The Messengers of God suffer persecution, imprisonment and even death. The prophet's tongue is the sword with which he proclaims truth and separates good from evil, bringing to earth a creative power which awakens a new consciousness. In the day of a prophet the old order crumbles, resulting in great confusion, while following his appearance on earth dawns a new civilization.

When does a Prophet come?

A prophet appears about once in a thousand years. He becomes the pivotal point of the spiritual seasons. The advent of a prophet is the springtime; his teaching, the summer; when the divine precepts penetrate the hearts of his followers, the harvest; at length comes the winter when religion is handed down and accepted without question and without ecstacy.

Mental concepts obscure the love of God. Minds of limitation construct dogma; forms and ceremonies creep in and become overweaningly important. Belief is no longer fluid, spontaneous—it becomes inflexible like the ice of winter. The cold winds of dispute blow over the land and the true seeker knows not where to turn for guidance.

In such a dark hour comes the Illumined One; born under the laws of nature; arising from a despised people of the remote East. He walks among men bringing the springtime and where he

steps the earth blossoms. The Word is made flesh and dwells amongst us. The new light creating a higher vibration crumbles barriers and traditions —governments fall—idols are overthrown. But seeing eyes glimpse the vision of a new day.

"At this time, the Morn of Knowledge hath dawned, and the lamps of travelling and way-faring are put out."

The Seven Valleys: BAHÁ'U'LLÁH.

Is the station of the Prophets a single one?

No. "There are two stations for the suns rising from the Dayspring of Divinity." (Bahá'u'lláh). In one station the prophet speaks or writes as a man charged by God with a message, in the other, as giving the direct Divine utterance. His human personality has been chosen by God. It is not of his own will that he assumes hardship and difficulties. As Jesus said, "Father, if it be possible let

this cup pass from me," so Bahá'u'lláh said, "Had another been found, we would not have made ourself an object of censure, derision and calumnies on the part of the people." But the divine call is clear and imperative and God's will is substituted for the human will. The Messenger accepts it with radiant acquiescence.

The distinguishing characteristic of the human personality of a prophet is utter humility—lowly service to mankind, evinced by Jesus in washing the feet of his disciples and by Bahá'u'lláh in becoming a servant to his servants, dividing among them his portion of bread and taking for himself "divine nourishment"—hunger.

When speaking as a divine being the prophet turns the mirror of his mind to God and reflects God's will. Speaking from this station, when asked whether He was Christ, the Son of God, Jesus answered: "Thou hast said." And Bahá'u'lláh writes: "Naught is seen in my temple but the

Temple of God, in my beauty but His Beauty, in my being but His Being, and in myself but Himself."

What in the physical world symbolizes the succession of God's Messengers?

The sun. "For if the sun of today says 'I am the sun of yesterday' it is true; and yet if, in accordance to daily sequence, it says 'I am other than the sun of yesterday' this is also true. Likewise the days: If it be said that all the days are the same, it is true; and if it be said that according to name and designation they differ from one another this is true as thou seest. For though they are the same, yet in each there is a name, quality and designation which is different from the other."

Ighán: BAHÁ'U'LLÁH.

Are miracles a proof of Prophethood?

Miracles are convincing only to the followers of a prophet. The Buddhists are not convinced by the miracles of Moses, nor the Muḥammadans by the miracles of Jesus. Christ, speaking of miracles with His disciples said: "Greater things shall ye do"—showing that the higher spiritual laws could be brought into action by men of faith.

Is one Prophet greater than another?

"All the prophets are lights, they only differ in degree; they shine like brilliant heavenly bodies, each have their appointed place and time of ascension. Some are like lamps, some like the moon, some like distant stars, and a few are like the sun, shining from one end of the earth to the other. Religions are like the branches of one Tree. One branch is high, one is low and one in the centre, yet all draw their life from one stem."

'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Are Messengers of God still needed?

"The Jews in the days of Jesus thought Abraham and Moses were sufficient for them and turned away from Christ, regarding his teaching as dangerous. Should Christians follow their example? If God in His Infinite Bounty sends a new message of loving counsel and instruction, are we to shut the door in the messenger's face saying: "We have no need of a new message from God; we received all the teaching we need nineteen centuries ago"? Assuredly not.

Christ gave no intimation that when his earthly mission and that of his immediate followers was accomplished, the book of revelation would be closed. On the contrary, when his sojourn among men was drawing to its end, he said: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." Here

is surely a clear promise that revelation will continue until "all truth" has been revealed.

Jesus said to his disciples: "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward." Would Christ have uttered these words had he believed that the day of prophets was ended, that after he had founded his church there would be "no need" of further prophets?"

J. E. Esselmont.

Why do the Messengers speak in parables?

The revelations of the prophets can never be adequately translated, owing to the poverty and imperfections of our language. Their thought is so lofty that human minds do not grasp it—hence the use of allegories. Parables make men ponder and pray for enlightenment that they may understand the hidden meaning. Search for truth deepens man's capacity, clarifies his vision without

engendering intellectual pride. Objective statements are marked by their epoc, while truth clothed in symbol is ever the same.

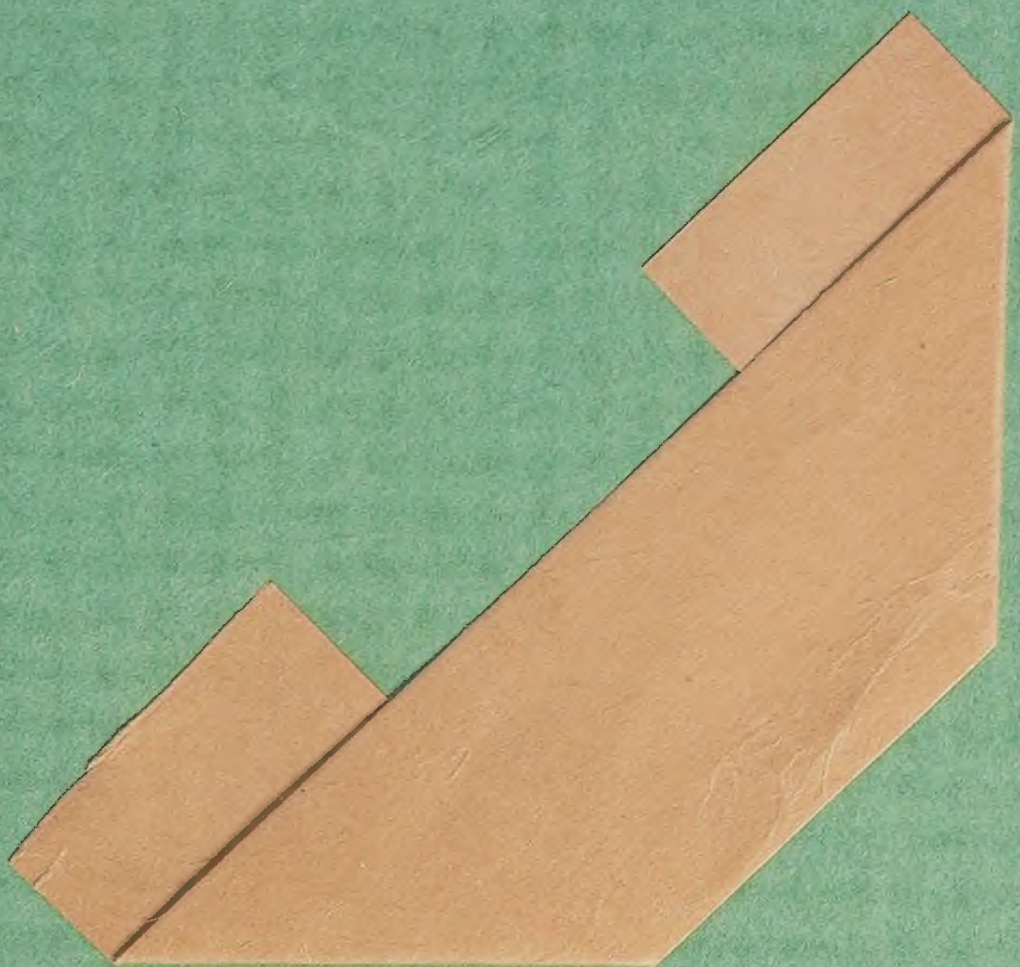
* * * *

The station of the Messenger is described by Jesus in His saying: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. He who believeth in Me believeth in My Father who sent Me."

'Abdu'l-Bahá gives this picture of the Messenger of God: "The Manifestation is the Perfect Man, the great Exemplar for Mankind, the First Fruit of the tree of humanity. Until we know Him we do not know the latent possibilities within ourselves . . . By loving the Manifestation of God and following His teachings we are enabled, little by little to realize the potential perfections within ourselves; then, and not until then, does the meaning and purpose of life and of the universe become apparent."

B. R. DOERFLER
ART
PRINTING
NEW YORK

OCT 22 1935

NOV 5

GTU Library
3 2400 00730 9051